

Message Text

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ACTION EB-08

INFO OCT-01 EA-12 IO-14 ISO-00 AGRE-00 CEA-01 CIAE-00

COME-00 DODE-00 FRB-01 H-02 INR-10 INT-05 L-03

LAB-04 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 CTME-00 AID-05 SS-15

STR-07 ITC-01 TRSE-00 ICA-20 SP-02 SOE-02 OMB-01

DOE-15 /136 W

-----097403 210550Z /64

R 200700Z APR 78

FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 102

INFO USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY MANILA

UNCLAS SINGAPORE 1788

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ETRD, US, ASEAN

SUBJECT: ASEAN-US MTN TALKS

1. MORNING DAILY STRAITS TIMES EDITORIALIZED APRIL 20 ON MTN TALKS BETWEEN US AND ASEAN PRESENTLY UNDERWAY IN SINGAPORE. EDITORIAL SAID THAT US GOVERNMENT WAS OBVIOUSLY SINCERE IN PROMOTING FREE TRADE BUT THAT NOTHING NEW WAS LIKELY TO COME FROM TALKS.

2. FULL TEXT FOLLOWS: "THE TWO DAYS OF TALKS BETWEEN SENIOR ASEAN AND AMERICAN TRADE OFFICIALS ARE PART OF THE CONTINUING DIALOGUE THE REGIONAL ASSOCIATION IS HAVING WITH THE MAJOR WESTERN ECONOMIES. SINCE SOME OF THE GROUNDWORK HAS BEEN CLEARED IN PREVIOUS MEETINGS, IT COULD BE HOPED THAT CONCRETE PROGRESS CAN BE MADE IN MAPPING OUT STRATEGIES TO INCREASE TRADE WITH THE UNITED STATES WITHIN THE MULTI-LATERAL TRADE NEGOTIATIONS (MLTN) FRAMEWORK. HOWEVER, ALTHOUGH THERE

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APPEARS TO BE LARGE AREAS OF COMMON THINKING ON TRADE LIBERALIZATION, THERE ARE REALLY SLIM PROSPECTS FOR BREAKING NEW GROUND. ASEAN PROPOSALS ON THE REDUCTION OF TARIFF AND NON-TARIFF BARRIERS ARE LIKELY TO BE LISTENED TO WITH MUCH SYMPATHY AND RECEIVED WITH LITTLE POSITIVE ACTION. THIS IS BECAUSE THE U.S. IS IN NO POSITION TO LIBERALIZE SUBSTANTIALLY GIVEN ITS ENORMOUS TRADE DEFICITS AND MOUNTING LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL PRESSURE

FOR IMPORT CONTROLS. HOW LONG THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION
CAN HOLD OUT IS AN OPEN QUESTION.

3 "DESPITE ADVERSE ECONOMIC CONDITIONS, THERE
SHOULD BE NO DOUBT ABOUT THE OFFICIAL AMERICAN
INTENTION, WHICH IS TO DO AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE TO
PROMOTE FREER TRADE. IN FACT, THE AMERICANS HAVE
DONE MORE IN THIS THAN EITHER THAN JAPANESE OR THE
WEST GERMANS, EVEN IN THE FACE OF THE SAGGING U.S.
DOLLAR. AND WASHINGTON KNOWS THE VALUE OF DEVELOPING
FURTHER ECONOMIC RAPPORT WITH THE ASEAN COUNTRIES,
A POLICY ON WHICH THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN
UNEQUIVOCAL. THEREFORE, IF A TURN-AROUND IN THE U.S.
ECONOMY CAN BE ACHIEVED -- ASSUMING THAT THE SURGE
IN WALL STREET CAN BE MAINTAINED AND IS A GOOD
BAROMETER OF THINGS TO COME -- THEN GREAT POTENTIAL
EXISTS FOR THE AMERICANS TO OPEN WIDER THEIR DOORS
TO ASEAN GOODS. AFTER ALL, ASEAN'S TOTAL CONTRIBUTION
TO THE MASSIVE TRADE GAP OF THE AMERICANS CAN ONLY
BE MARGINAL, SO THERE IS A GREAT DEAL OF ROOM TO PLAY
AROUND WITH. IT IS UP TO THE ASEAN PARTNERS TO PUT
FORWARD SENSIBLE AND PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS ON HOW THE
VOLUME OF TRADE WITH THE U.S. CAN BE INCREASED."
HOLDRIDGE

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